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ABSTRACT

Public education in Sweden and the United States has long been viewed as a critical social investment that fires the engines of economic productivity and social progress. This paper presents the findings of two studies that examined superintendents' self-descriptions of their administrative work, particularly in the areas of instructional leadership and curriculum. Data were gathered through a survey of 397 superintendents in Wisconsin and 280 superintendents in Sweden, which equals 74 percent of all superintendents in Sweden and 81 percent of district administrators in Wisconsin. The data found similar distributions of superintendents acting as instructional supporters, delegators, collaborators, and visionaries in both groups. Both groups of superintendents shared experiences and beliefs about their primary leadership responsibilities and activities in their districts. Communications, public relations, legal and political issues, and facilities management were important and time-consuming tasks of Wisconsin superintendents but not for their Swedish counterparts. Wisconsin superintendents reported that they were no longer the "expert" educators; Swedish superintendents tended to view themselves as supporters, managers, and delegators, rather than as hands-on instructional leaders. Instructional leadership was more prevalent in Wisconsin than in Sweden. Respondents in both countries reported discrepancies between their most important responsibilities and the time spent on actual tasks, recognized the need to adjust their traditional sources of power, and viewed budget and finance as their most important and time-consuming administrative task. Seven tables are included. (Contains 29 references.) (LMI)

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Leadership for Learning: A Study of the Instructional Leadership Roles of Superintendents in Sweden and Wisconsin

Paul V. Bredeson University of Wisconsin-Madison
Olof Johansson Umea University, Umea Sweden

Introduction: Purpose and Rationale

Public education in Sweden and the United States has long been viewed as a critical social investment that fires the engines of economic productivity and social progress. As each country deals with the allocation of scarce resources to meet various economic, political, and social demands, educational policy makers at national, state, and local levels are pressed by their constituents to reconcile public expenditures with measurable outcomes. The history, culture, and politics of each country have shaped unique educational institutions. Yet there are many similarities in the ways in which schools are organized and operated to achieve important social goals: an educated population, the nurturing of democratic values, and contributions to economic progress and individual well-being. The press to improve public education through significant reform initiatives is also something Wisconsin and Sweden have in common.

Within dynamic educational reform environments, the formal and informal roles of educators, including those of superintendents, in Sweden and the United States continue to undergo significant change. For example, the development of national standards and curricula, educational restructuring, the decentralization of authority, the use of standardized assessment

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practices, and experiments with funding non-public schools are among the many reform efforts directed at the improvement of education. These same change efforts reverberate through schools as roles, rules, relationships, and responsibilities continue to be renegotiated and reshaped, including those of the superintendent. A cross-cultural study of educational reform and the impact of those changes on the work of school superintendents has the potential to offer valuable insights to policy makers and practitioners on both sides of the Atlantic. The purpose of this paper is to present the findings from two empirical investigations that examined superintendents' self-descriptions of their administrative work, especially in the areas of instructional leadership and curriculum. The following questions guided our investigation.

1) How do superintendents in Sweden and Wisconsin describe their primary work as educational leaders?
2) How do superintendents describe their involvement in the areas of curriculum and instruction?
3) Do superintendents' descriptions of their involvement in curriculum development and instruction suggest identifiable role types for superintendents as instructional leaders?
3) In what ways have educational reform initiatives in Sweden and Wisconsin affected superintendents' instructional leadership?

Background

Though the cultural and historic roots of the

superintendency in Sweden and Wisconsin differ, superintendents have long been major figures in public education. Despite the recognized importance of this formal leadership position, scholars describe the superintendency as an under-researched area (Glass, 1992; Crowson and Glass, 1991). This is not to say research on the superintendency is nonexistent. Recent studies include investigations of leadership skills (Hoyle, English, and Steffy, 1990); the discretionary choices of superintendents (Lidstrom, 1991); gender, politics, and power relationships (Brunner, 1995; 1995a; Tallerico, Burstyn, and Poole, 1993); demographic profiles, career patterns, pre-service preparation and training, and work roles (Glass, 1992; Carter, Glass, and Hord, 1993; Murphy, 1994; Wimpelberg, 1988; Crowson, 1987); and the instructional leadership of superintendents (Bredeson, 1996; Faber, 1994; Floden, Porter, Alford, Freeman, Irwin, Schmidt, and Schwille, 1988; Johansson and Staberg, 1996; Johansson and Kallos, 1994; and Murphy and Hallinger, 1988).

Superintendents are looked to for leadership, especially in curriculum and instruction. Cuban (1984) concluded that school improvement could not be achieved without a high level of curriculum and instruction involvement on the part of superintendents. Peterson and Finn (1985) noted that it was rare to encounter a "high achieving school system with a low performance superintendent" (p. 42) in the area of curriculum and instructional involvement. Other scholars describe the ways in which superintendents are involved in curriculum and instruction,

the 'technical core' of school (Peterson, Murphy, and Hallinger, 1987; Murphy and Hallinger, 1988; Wimpelberg, 1988; Bjork, 1990; and Hord, 1990). As important as the superintendent's engagement in curriculum and instruction is, the workplace realities for most superintendents may be closer to one veteran administrator's characterization. "We're hired for our ideas on curriculum and fired for ones on finance."

Understanding superintendents' perspectives on their work is crucial to understanding the relationships among school reform, leadership, and educational outcomes. Since there are discrepancies between what superintendents say is important and what they actually spend their time doing (Bredeson & Faber, 1994; Cregard, 1996), it is important to examine how superintendents deal with these contradictions. This paper addresses the role conflicts and paradoxes between what superintendents say are their leadership priorities and what they actually do. Our examination of the self-reports of superintendents provide a baseline of empirical data on superintendents' descriptions of their involvement in curriculum and instruction in Sweden and Wisconsin.

From these investigations rich descriptions and better understandings of the work of school superintendents are emerging. There continues, however, to be a paucity of empirical research on issues of superintendents' roles as instructional leaders in their districts. There are only limited descriptions of superintendents' beliefs about their work and how they put

those beliefs into practice within highly dynamic and often times highly charged political environments. Comparative cross-national studies are even more rare. We believe the collaborative investigations presented in this paper make an important contribution in these areas.

Methods

Three hundred ninety-seven superintendents in Wisconsin and 280 superintendents in Sweden participated in the two studies. Superintendents completed a three-page written questionnaire. A total of 326 surveys, representing 82.1% of the district administrators in Wisconsin, and 207, 74.2% of all superintendents in Sweden, returned questionnaires for analysis. The written survey was developed, piloted, and refined in earlier studies of the superintendency (Bredeson, 1994; 1996). The questionnaire consisted of four types of survey items--demographic information, open-ended queries, Likert-scaled items, and rank-order responses. For use in Sweden, the questionnaire was translated, piloted, and revised for the mailed survey (Johansson and Lundberg, 1995).

Because school governance structures and the work of superintendents in Sweden and Wisconsin share many similar features, we were able to translate all survey items and aggregate the two data sets for meaningful cross-national comparisons. Data analysis was completed in stages. First, we examined each data set separately. After preliminary analyses of each data set, we then made cross-data set comparisons. Numeric

data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Content analysis and constant-comparative data analysis were used to analyze open-ended responses. As noted in an earlier report of data from the Wisconsin survey,

> A major consideration in the design of this investigation was to provide structural corroboration through the use of multiple survey items in the questionnaire. One purpose in gathering these data was to better understand superintendents' views of their work, especially in the areas of instructional leadership and curriculum development. Being able to triangulate responses from multiple survey items helped provide detailed descriptions of superintendents' work, establish credibility and external reliability (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982), and suggest important implications for further research and for administrative practice. (Bredeson, 1996, 247-248)

Findings

A profile of superintendents

The superintendency remains a male-dominated profession both in Sweden (82.0% male) and in Wisconsin (93.5% male).(Insert Table 1 here) In Sweden women superintendents represent 18% of all superintendencies, nearly triple the percentage of women superintendents in Wisconsin (6.5%) and across the United States (6.6%). Though the range of total years of administrative experience are similar between Swedish superintendents (1-30 years) and Wisconsin administrators (1-35), the average years of experience in the superintendency is significantly greater in Wisconsin (X=10.45 years) to that of Swedish superintendents (X=3.5 years).

Despite having on average three times as much experience in the superintendency, Wisconsin administrators tend to be much more professionally nomadic. The average number of years

Wisconsin superintendents have been in their current school district is 5.86 years. Swedish superintendents who have moved into their administrative positions from other educational positions, tend to remain in the same school district. Swedish superintendents report that they have spent 14 years on average in their current district (municipality) However, a new career pattern among superintendents is emerging in Sweden. The decentralization of educational authority from the national government to municipalities and various reforms promulgated by the National Agency for Education have resulted in greater mobility of school superintendents among municipalities. Our data indicated that 22% of Swedish superintendents have recently made such a move. Administrator mobility is common in Wisconsin where the average rate of superintendent turnover is between 11-13% annually (Kayon, 1993). Novice superintendents generally begin their administrative careers in small, rural school districts. With administrative experience they then move to larger suburban and urban schools districts. Administrators in Wisconsin are encouraged to make such moves because of increased salaries and enhanced prestige that come with being superintendent of large, affluent, and often times innovative school districts.

Another difference between Swedish superintendents and their counterparts in Wisconsin is their professional career path. For instance, in Sweden only 3.8% of superintendents hold a teacher's license and only 48.1% have been former principals or assistants.

It is common for superintendents, especially those recently employed as superintendents, to have professional work experience outside education in such fields as public administration, social services, local municipal government, the military, and business. In Sweden, the number of superintendents who hold a teachers' degree is decreasing. In Wisconsin, with few exceptions, superintendents must have had a minimum of three years classroom teaching experience to qualify for an administrator's license. Thus, 98% of all superintendents have moved into their positions through teaching and the principalship. Differences in professional training and career advancement may also help to explain differences in the work relationships among superintendents and teachers and principals. Swedish superintendents describe greater professional distance between themselves and their teachers and principals than do Wisconsin superintendents. In Wisconsin, superintendents' former experiences as teachers and principals work, though often many years prior, establish a lasting tie linking superintendents closely to their professional colleagues, teachers and principals. One reason for the greater distance between superintendents, principals, and teachers in Sweden can be explained in relation to a change in role definition. In recent years an effective superintendent is seen as one who can successfully deal with decreasing budgets and not with pedagogical innovations, despite its importance in the political rhetoric. This point will be discussed later in the paper under

superintendent instructional leadership types.

Superintendents' Work

Respondents were asked to identify the three most important things they did as superintendents. Their responses yielded 747 (Sweden) and 1021 (Wisconsin) items describing their work priorities. Our content analysis of each set resulted in 10 and 9 major categories of administrative tasks respectively. (Insert Table 2 here) Swedish administrators identified instructional leadership(school development), working with the school board, and budget/finances as their three most important administrative tasks. In Wisconsin, budget/finance, public relations/communications, and personnel administration were the most frequently mentioned tasks.

Next, using a list of administrative tasks previously identified in the literature, we asked superintendents to rank each task by its importance and by the amount of time each required in their daily work. (Insert Tables 3,4 here) Once again, Swedish superintendents ranked school development as their most important administrative responsibility. Planning/goals formulation and budget/finance were ranked second and third most important tasks. However, when we asked superintendents to estimate the amount of time various administrative tasks required, the order of tasks changed. For Swedish superintendents, school development fell to fourth place, while budget/finance, school board training, and planning/goals, each

hungry for time, ranked first through third. Wisconsin superintendents ranked budget/finance, planning/goals formulation, and public relations/communications as their top three administrative tasks. When asked how they spent their time, budget/finances and public relations were ranked first and third, while personnel administration replaced planning/goals formulation. Instructional leadership ranked as their fourth most important task fell to seventh in terms of the amount of time superintendents spent in that area.

The responses of superintendents in both countries also suggested that they were experiencing the stress of role conflicts and work overload. When asked who they would hire if they could hire someone to support their work, superintendents in both countries simply wanted a general assistant to help share the work. (Table 5) Educational reform mandates, new laws, the proliferation of programs to meet increasingly diverse student needs, and decentralization of authority have added enormous amounts of work, especially paperwork to comply with state and federal requirements. Swedish superintendents also would hire assistants to help in the area of budget and finances, program evaluation, and personnel administration. In Wisconsin, superintendents would delegate work to assistants in the areas of curriculum and instruction, business management, and personnel administration.

We also wanted to know specifically what superintendents meant when they said they were involved in the areas of

curriculum and instruction. We asked them, "Among the various responsibilities of superintendents is instructional leadership. What are the most important things you do as superintendent in the area of curriculum development and instructional leadership? Wisconsin superintendents provided a total of 708 responses to this survey question. Using a constant comparative analysis of these open-ended responses, four major categories, or themes, that captured what superintendents meant when they said they were involved in curriculum and instructional leadership activities, emerged: **instructional vision** (n=136), **instructional collaboration** (n=154), **instructional support** (n=265), and **instructional delegation** (n=153) (Bredeson, 1996). Independent corroboration of these categories was established using an expert outsider, a director of instruction and former superintendent. Using a subset of the 708 open-ended responses, we asked the outside expert to place each response item in one of the four instructional leadership categories. There was over 90% agreement between the initial categorization of items and that of the outside expert. Where any differences occurred, the responses were discussed and then categorized within one of the four categories.

Next we used the instructional leadership taxonomy to classify each superintendent by his/her dominant role preferences in the area of curriculum and instruction. We analyzed all survey responses. Based on that analysis, we identified the dominant instructional leadership role reflected in each

superintendent's responses across survey items. Table 6 is a display of superintendents classified by one of four instructional leadership types. Slightly over 36% of superintendents in Sweden (n=103) and in Wisconsin (n=115) described their primary instructional leadership role as one of support. **Instructional support** to these administrators meant providing financial, personnel, and material resources, logistical and political system support, psychological support, and emotional encouragement. The second most common instructional role was **instructional delegation**, Sweden (n= 93, 33.0%) and Wisconsin (n=83, 26.0%). In this role, superintendents' descriptions suggested that they remained distant from direct personal involvement in curriculum and instructional leadership. One superintendent wrote, "I hire good people in that area and get the hell out of their way." In both Sweden and Wisconsin, these superintendents viewed themselves primarily as managers of systems whose work, when done effectively, made it possible for teachers, principals, and curriculum directors to carry out their work and be successful instructional leaders. Superintendents' work preferences in the area of instructional delegation centered on monitoring activities, keeping the school board up-to-date on important curriculum issues, employing knowledgeable people in the area of curriculum and instruction, and permitting these educators the autonomy to take the ball and run with it (Johansson and Kallos, 1994). The superintendent's role in the new system, according to

most job descriptions for superintendents describes the position in terms of educational leadership. However, the reality with decreasing budgets for the school sector has forced the superintendent into much more of a managerial mode of leadership rather than a leader of pedagogy and educational development. In a 1996 study of principals in Canada and Sweden by Begley and Johansson (1997), the shift from instructional leadership to more traditional managerial leadership tasks was evident for principals as well. The principals in this study were exposed to nine critical situations and asked to describe how they would solve the problem posed. The principals by a six to one ratio used managerial arguments over educational arguments. Against this background, it could be argued that for most superintendents organizational stability is more important than organizational development (Johansson and Bredeson, 1997). The difference between the percentages likely reflects two important distinctions. Until 1991 Swedish superintendents were administrators working out of the National Agency for Education. As administrators for the State, they delegated much of the operational duties to others at the municipal level. "In 1991, decisions were made which meant the municipalities became the responsible authority for schools instead of the State. The State's role is now to set the broad goals for education via the School Act and the national curriculum and to follow-up and evaluate the activities in the schools." (Lundberg, 1996) Superintendents in Wisconsin, though ultimately responsible to

State, are employed and evaluated by local school boards. Another important difference is that Swedish superintendents' are less likely to have been teachers and principals. Their experiences have been as State education officials or as administrators in fields outside of education. The third instructional role type for superintendents was **instructional collaboration** (Sweden n=17, 17.0% and Wisconsin n=81, 25.4%). In general instructional collaborators tended to describe themselves as administrators who "rolled up their sleeves" and worked closely with teachers, principals, and others to plan, design, implement, and assess curriculum and instruction in their districts. **Instructional visionary** was the fourth instructional role. Fourteen percent of Swedish superintendents (n=41) and 12.5% of Wisconsin superintendents (n=40) described how they "painted pictures" and "allowed dreamers' dreams to come true" while they kept the focus and purpose of their work, and the work of others, on student learning and outcomes. These superintendents also described themselves as having a personal interest and stake in teaching and learning.

It is important to point out, however, that the four role types are heuristic categories, and that they should not be viewed as "pure administrative types." There are overlaps in the four instructional leadership roles. The complexities of superintendents' work as well as unique organization contexts and cultures require that they be versatile administrators who can provide a vision, collaborate and support their professional

colleagues, and delegate authority and responsibilities appropriately (Johansson and Bredeson, 1997). Superintendents are not managers deterministically tethered to the characteristics of one instructional role type. Our classifications are meant to be interpretive, not rigid role prescriptions.

Our findings indicate that educational restructuring initiatives have significantly influenced the work of school superintendents. Public pressure through various reform efforts, national and local, has resulted in Swedish superintendents describing school development, planning and goal setting, and budget and finance respectively as their top three leadership tasks. In response to a second query (Table 7),(insert Table 7 here) Swedish superintendents reported that the top three responsibilities their governing boards held them accountable for were budget and finances (n=243, 34.1%), instructional leadership(school development) (n=112, 15.7%), and evaluation of programs (n=68, 9.5%). Superintendents in the Wisconsin listed budget and finance, planning and goals, and community/public relations as their top job responsibilities priorities. When Wisconsin superintendents were asked what their boards held them accountable for, analysis of open-ended responses indicated that budget and finances (n=242, 24.9%)was the major response. Communications/Public relations (n=175, 18.0%), personnel administration (n=154, 15.8%), and general system administration=106, 11.0%) were also listed as major responsibilities. Instructional leadership and curriculum

development were identified as important tasks, ranked 4th and 5th in Wisconsin and Sweden respectively. However, the priority given to budgets and finance represents superintendents' pragmatic understanding that effective leadership requires fiscal and political deftness. The priority also suggests that superintendents' curricular visions maybe important, but good fiscal management and efficient use of resources are tasks for which superintendents are held accountable and correspondingly rewarded or sanctioned. In addition, superintendents in both Sweden and Wisconsin have learned through experience that budgets and finance are levers of power, both inside and outside their school organizations. With control of these levers they have greater opportunity to articulate educational priorities and to translate school plans and goals into educational realities. Further, when Swedish superintendents were asked to reflect on beginning their careers again as superintendents and to describe how their education and training to be effective could be strengthened, 35.0% indicated that they could use more knowledge about finance and business. In Wisconsin, superintendents wanted more training in finance, politics, and legal issues in education.

Conclusions

At the outset of the two surveys of superintendents in Sweden and in Wisconsin, we recognized that they had much in common as educational leaders. However, we were struck by the remarkable similarities, and in some cases nearly identical

findings, as we compared Swedish and Wisconsin superintendents. Our classification of superintendents as instructional role types resulted in similar distributions of superintendents as instructional supporters, delegators, collaborators, and visionaries. The structure and mission of public schools in part explain much of the similarities we found. In addition, the nature of administrative work accounts for shared experiences and beliefs about superintendents' primary leadership responsibilities and activities in their districts. These similarities were evident despite very different educational reform agendas, the move to decentralize educational authority in Sweden and attempts to move toward state standards for curriculum and assessment of student outcomes in Wisconsin.

In contrast, the history of locally governed schools in Wisconsin, and across the United States, has required superintendents to be savvy local politicians who exercise extensive autonomy. The increased politicization of educational issues, magnified public scrutiny of schools and their outcomes, and demand for greater accountability through state mandated curriculum standards and assessment procedures have all influenced superintendents' professional socialization. Successful leadership of schools, or just survival, require professional expertise, especially in the areas of local politics and finances.

There were, however, some important differences between superintendents' work in Sweden and Wisconsin. Communications/

public relations, legal and political issues, and facilities management were important as well as very time consuming tasks of Wisconsin superintendents but not for Swedish administrators. The fact that a national curriculum exists, that legal traditions tend toward communal good and rights over individual rights, and delegation of responsibility for facility maintenance to other school officials account for the low priority of any of these task areas for Swedish superintendents.

Superintendents are conflicted by differences, that they freely acknowledge, between what they say about the importance of curriculum and instructional issues in their work and how much time they can actually spend on those tasks. Living with this contradiction is reflected in their responses to our question about hiring an assistant to help relieve role overload. In Sweden and Wisconsin, general administrative assistants and directors of curriculum are the top preferences. This likely reflects superintendents' acknowledgment of their own strengths, based on training and experience, as well as their recognition of the complexities of curricular expertise and leadership in today's school systems. Perhaps it is unrealistic at dawn of a new millennium to think of superintendents as "teachers of teachers" or as "the local expert" on education. The professionalization of education through formal training programs in universities and the adoption of state licensure requirements for teachers and administrators have greatly enhanced the levels of professional expertise of all educators. Thus, in Wisconsin

superintendents are no longer "the expert" charged with leading a group of ragtag, semi-skilled staff with limited educational training. In Sweden there is recognition of the importance of school development as a major leadership responsibility. However, because of the dual political message, newly hired superintendents are employed to be good instructional leaders but their boards are most interested in cutting budgets and personnel. Thus, though they would like to be instructional leaders they tend to view their leadership role as supporters, managers, and effective delegators rather than as hands-on instructional leaders. Swedish superintendents, like the majority of their American counterparts, defer to the educational expertise of teachers, directors of curriculum, and principals.

Superintendents do nonetheless remain involved in curriculum and instruction in various ways. Professional and personal interest, the pragmatics of daily work routines, and the politics of educational leadership in their districts have shaped superintendents' interpretations of what it means to be involved in curriculum and instruction. To these 533 superintendents, curriculum development and instructional leadership meant using their power and expertise to provide instructional support (financial, personnel, material, logistical, political, and psychological assistance to magnify the efforts of others in their districts working on curriculum and instruction). For nearly a third of Swedish superintendents and over a quarter of those in Wisconsin, instructional delegation was their response

to role overload and role conflict. These administrators knew their limitations, remained informed but distant from curriculum and instructional tasks, and delegated to others major responsibilities for curriculum and school development. Instructional collaboration and instructional vision were also ways in which superintendents described their involvement in curriculum and instruction. Instructional collaboration was more prevalent in Wisconsin than in Sweden. We believe the explanation for this difference stems from two major differences. First, the principalship in the old centralized Swedish school system was a very important position with a great deal of formal power. The principal's role in many places is still viewed as it was formerly even though the position today is not supported by the law. The idea of a powerful, autonomous principal has been transferred into the newly decentralized school system governed by goals and objectives. This is likely one reason why superintendents tend not to view instructional leadership over principals and teachers as their primary responsibility. Second, even for those superintendents who were trained as educators the fact that they were formerly State education officials contributed to superintendents maintaining greater distance from educators and their work than did their counterparts in Wisconsin, nearly all of whom had been teachers and principals.

Superintendents in Sweden and Wisconsin reported similar discrepancies between what they said were their most important responsibilities as educational leaders and what they actually

spent their time doing. Superintendents viewed themselves as educational leaders and reported instructional leadership and school development as critically important administrative responsibilities. The decentralization of authority and governance in Sweden has changed the primary responsibility of superintendents, especially in the area of school development. Though the National Agency for Education continues to control the curriculum, the articulation of that curriculum and accountability for it at the municipal level reside with the superintendent and his/her staff while school principals are responsible for the everyday work in schools. In Wisconsin, the early history of education defined the role of superintendents as the "teacher of teachers" and "superintendent of instruction". As formal educational leaders, superintendents always had significant positional power to influence events and direct schools and the people in them. Superintendents also had significant personal power based on their professional expertise in teaching and learning. Teachers, principals, school board members, and local citizens deferred to superintendents' professional educational expertise. Though still important, the primacy of educational expertise has given way to expertise grounded in managerial and political expertise. Increased state and federal policy mandates, the unionization of educators, recurring cycles of educational reforms, and the increased politicization of issues surrounding schools require educational leaders who are knowledgeable about budgets and finances, public

relations, personnel management, and politics. Wisconsin superintendents reported that they wanted to spend more time on curriculum and instruction but found themselves having to concentrate more and more of their work days on budgets, finances, personnel, and politics than responsibilities in the areas of curriculum and instruction.

Superintendents in Sweden and Wisconsin have adjusted their work role priorities to meet the demands of state mandates and various educational reform initiatives. To address new social/political realities in local school districts, they recognize the need to make adjustments in their traditional sources of power. Over the past decade in Sweden, there has been a realignment of superintendents' major sources of power from influence based nearly exclusively on positional power as national government education officers to sources of power flowing from their emerging local political power. Yukl (1989) reminds us that, "Political action is a pervasive process in organizations that involves efforts by members of an organization to increase their power or to protect existing power sources. Political actions may be carried out by organizational subunits or coalitions as well as by individual managers. Although the ultimate source of political power is usually authority, control over resources, or control over information, political power involves influence processes that transform and magnify the initial basis of power in unique ways". (p. 25) Swedish superintendents' leadership had traditionally been legitimated

through the imprimatur of the State and its authority. With the decentralization of authority to municipalities, superintendents have become much more vulnerable, and accordingly more attuned, to local political pressures. As a result, superintendents need to spend significantly more time legitimating their influence with local constituents and competing with other local officials for scarce resources. The high turnover rate of superintendents in Sweden every 3.5 years, clearly is an indication that the superintendency is a job that requires both administrative and political skills to minimize tensions between the superintendent and his/her political board. As our findings illustrate, superintendents' primary levers of influence in their districts continue to come from formal positional authority, especially the control of resources and information, and from their political power. For superintendents in Sweden and Wisconsin, budget and finances were viewed as their most important administrative task and the responsibility that required the most time. Moreover, control over budget and finance defined what they meant when they said they were involved in curriculum development and instructional leadership.

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TABLE 1

A Profile of Superintendents in Sweden and Wisconsin

Characteristic	Sweden	Wisconsin
Gender		
Male	82.0%	93.5%
Female	18.0%	6.5%
Average Number of Years as Superintendent	3.5 years	10.5 years
Average Number of Years Current District	14.0 years	5.8 years
Former Teachers/Principals	51.9%	98.0%

TABLE 2

Superintendents' Most Important Administrative Tasks

Administrative Task	Rank Order of Importance*	
	Swedish Superintendents	Wisconsin Superintendents
Budget and Finances	3	1
Communications/Public Relations	10	2
Personnel Administration	8	3
Work with School Board	2	4
Leadership/Vision/Purposing	6	5
Instructional Leadership/Curriculum Development	1	6
General System Administration	5	7
Work with Staff/Others	4	8
Planning	9	9
Evaluation	7	*

*Note: Open-ended responses yielded 10 tasks for Swedish superintendents and 9 tasks for Wisconsin superintendents.

TABLE 3

Rank Order of Superintendents' Administrative Tasks by Importance

Administrative Task*	Sweden		Wisconsin	
	Mean Rank	Rank Order	Mean Rank	Rank Order
Budget and School Finance	3.6	3	3.2	1
Planning and Goals Formulation	3.0	2	4.0	2
Community/ Public Relations	7.8	7	4.3	3
Curriculum and Instructional Leadership	4.8	5	4.4	4
School Development	3.0	1	--	--
Personnel Administration	8.0	9	4.5	5
Professional Growth/Staff Development	5.0	6	5.8	6
School Board Relations/ Training	4.7	4	5.9	7
Legal Issues	9.3	11	6.4	8
Political Issues	8.5	10	*	*
Facilities Management	7.9	8	6.5	9

*Note: Task categories vary slightly.

TABLE 4

Mean Rank Order of Administrative Tasks
by Amount of Time Spent

Tasks*	Mean Rank	Rank Order	Mean Rank	Rank Order
	Sweden		Wisconsin	
Budget and Finance	2.4	1	2.7	1
Personnel Administration	6.4	7	3.5	2
Community/ Public Relations	8.3	10	4.6	3
Facilities Management	6.6	8	5.1	4
Legal Issues	9.1	11	5.4	5
Political Issues	7.9	9	*	*
Planning and Goals Formulation	4.4	3	5.7	6
Curriculum and Instructional Leadership	5.8	5	5.7	7
School Development	4.5	4	*	*
School Board Relations/ Training	3.8	2	5.8	8
Professional Growth and Staff Development	6.0	6	6.7	9

*Note: Task categories vary slightly.

TABLE 6

Assistants Superintendents Would Hire

Type of Assistant	Number of Times Listed by Respondents		Percent of Total Items Listed	
	Sweden	Wisconsin	Sweden	Wisconsin
General Administrative Assistant	135	111	28.1	31.4
Director of Curriculum and Instruction	107	89	22.3	25.1
Business Management (Budget)	92	68	19.2	19.2
Personnel Director	50	24	10.4	6.8
Director for Supervision/ Staff Development	43	16	9.0	4.5
Public Relations	21	16	4.4	4.5
Facilities Manager	--	14		4.0
Pupil Services Director	--	9		2.5
Director of Planning	11	4	2.3	1.1
Transportation Coordinator	--	3		<1%
Work with School Board	21	--	4.4	--
Total Times Listed	**N = 480**	**N = 354**		

TABLE 4

Superintendents Categorized by Instructional Role Type

Instructional Role Type	Sweden		Wisconsin	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Instructional Visionary	41	14.0%	40	12.5%
Instructional Collaborator	17	17.0%	81	25.4%
Instructional Supporter	103	36.0%	115	36.1%
Instructional Delegator	93	33.0%	83	26.0%

TABLE 7

Superintendent Accountability to School Boards:
Most Important Responsibilities

Administrative Responsibility	Number of Times Listed		Percent of Total Items Listed	
	Sweden	Wisconsin	Sweden	Wisconsin
Budget and Finances	243	242	34.1	24.9
Communications and Public Relations	27	175	3.9	18.0
Personnel Administration	49	154	6.9	15.8
General System Administration and Management	52	107	7.3	11.0
Instructional Leadership	112	79	15.7	8.1
Work with School Board/Policy	59	60	8.3	6.2
Climate/ Culture/Staff Relations	53	56	7.4	5.6
Leadership-Vision-Purpose	29	41	4.1	4.2
Accomplishment of District Goals	--	35	--	3.6
Planning	21	23	2.9	2.4
Evaluation	68	--	9.5	--
Total Number of Items	**N = 713**	**N = 972**		